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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: SPOT REPORT: SLUBICE, POLISH BORDER TOWN  
STRADDLING MORE THAN THE ODER RIVER

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Poloff went to Slubice, which sits on the Polish-German border, to investigate labor disputes and a longstanding issue concerning the town's Jewish cemetery. Despite its location in a special economic zone, unemployment hovers near 30%, higher than the surrounding province. One local employer, Impel-Tom, fired an employee for attempting to organize a union. The employee successfully sued the employer, but organized labor is struggling to find a foothold. Slubice's 600 year-old Jewish cemetery has undergone some renovation in recent years, but much remains to be done. City officials are keen to see the removal of the ruins of a former motel/brothel on the site. The Foundation for the Protection of Jewish Heritage in Poland and the cemetery's owner, the Jewish Community of Szczecin plan to clear rubble and improve the site once funds from a private source are secured. END SUMMARY.

#### A TALE OF TWO CITIES

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12. (U) From 1250 through the end of World War II, what is today the city of Slubice comprised the eastern section of the German city of Frankfurt (Oder). In 1945, the communist governments fixed the Polish-German border on the Oder River thus creating the separate city. The Frankfurt-Slubice connection is still strong, with a half-mile bridge across the river as well as the Frankfurt-based Viadrina University, which has a campus (Collegium Polonicum) in Slubice. There is still passport control, but foot and auto traffic constantly move across the bridge and many Germans cross the border into Slubice to shop and eat.

#### LABOR SITUATION IN THE KOSTRZYN-SLUBICE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE

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13. (U) The business climate in Slubice is mixed. Due to location the area is somewhat of a transport hub with lots of truck traffic and some accompanying services. But unemployment is high: nearly 30% in the Kostrzyn-Slubice Special Economic Zone (KSSEZ) as compared with 20% in the entire Lubuskie Province. As it lies just 40 miles from Berlin, Slubice promotes itself as being Berlin's "Polish suburb," but this and the establishment of the KSSEZ have had little effect on the local and regional economy.

14. (U) In 1997 the GOP established the KSSEZ. Firms that invest in the zone receive real estate and employment tax breaks. Approximately 100 firms (primarily Polish but some German, Scandinavian, and Italian) have operations in the KSSEZ, most of these small operations with under 50

employees. According to government statistics the KSSEZ has created approximately 1,750 new jobs since its inception.

15. (SBU) On December 13 Poloff met Jacek Rosolowski, a worker fired from his job as a janitor in March after he attempted to organize a labor union at Impel-Tom, which provides contracted cleaning and kitchen services at hospitals. Rosolowski started work in September 2005 for the minimum wage (\$220 or 650 PLN per month). The company promised its 50 workers a pay raise in January 2006 but did not deliver, so Rosolowski and eleven others signed a letter to form a union. The next day he was fired without cause. He sued the firm for unlawful termination and damages, and in October won a settlement for \$2,400 (7,000 PLN). Impel-Tom has since dismissed without cause three more of the twelve individuals in November who attempted to form a union.

16. (SBU) Since his dismissal, Rosolowski has become active in the local labor movement and has organized a local chapter of the Committee for the Protection and Defense of Oppressed Workers (KPORP). Not a proper labor union, this small group works on the fringes to assist workers with legal issues. Rosolowski remains unemployed, and believes that local employers are blacklisting. He feels no physical danger, but many friends and former co-workers now ignore him or will not be seen in public with him.

17. (U) The majority of manual laborers in the KSSEZ are hired on short-term contracts and therefore not sufficiently able to organize unions. In addition to high unemployment in the area, the KPORP claims wages have trended steadily downward over the last several years. There are no active labor unions in local employers, and even the national Solidarity union was unable to organize a local chapter at area shops in

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the German supermarket chain Lidl.

#### CLEAN-UP NEEDED AT 14TH CENTURY JEWISH CEMETERY

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18. (U) Slubice is home to a large Jewish cemetery that existed from the year 1399 through December 1944. Three of those at rest on the grounds were a revered rabbi/teacher and his family from the eighteenth century. Following World War II and the division of the city the local government treated the cemetery as abandoned property and constructed intersecting rural highways along two sides of the grounds.

19. (SBU) In the early 1970s the Slubice government built the Staropolski Motel and an accompanying parking lot on the grounds of the abandoned cemetery. The motel became a favored site of local prostitutes. Slubice resident Edward Fedyszyn told Poloff on December 13 that he remembers when builders dug up the marble gravestones for resale and removed the human remains. In 1985 the regional Public Office for the Protection of Relics designated the area a heritage site.

They closed down the motel, cleaned, and planted trees on much of the land with the financial support of international Jewish organizations. In 1999 Frankfurt and Slubice jointly dedicated and erected four memorial tablets in the former cemetery: a twelve foot-high brick and marble memorial tablet at the entrance and, on the other side of the plot approximately 100 yards away, three smaller brick and marble tablets on the former site of the revered rabbi and his family's graves.

110. (SBU) In 2002 Rabbi B. Polatsek of Brooklyn, NY attempted to further rehabilitate the cemetery site. The Slubice government cooperated and transferred the land free of charge to the Jewish Community of Szczecin (Gmina) in early 2004, whose first act was to destroy the motel, which since its closure in 1985 had served as an ersatz brothel, down to the foundations. The foundation and neatly stacked piles of bricks remain to this day. In October 2006 the County

Building Inspector declared the ruins a public hazard and ordered their removal.

¶11. (SBU) Rabbi Polatsek contacted the Embassy in late October very concerned over the lack of progress on cleaning of the cemetery site. On December 14 Slubice Vice Mayor Marcin Jablonski told Poloff that while he is very keen to see the motel site cleaned up, since the land is private property any expense is the Gmina's responsibility. Polatsek claims to have anywhere between \$20,000 and \$300,000 (the amount varies) to contribute for this project and proposes a three-stage plan: removal of the motel ruins, the erection of a fence, and the formation of an international committee to oversee the maintenance of the cemetery. The Warsaw-based Foundation for the Protection of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FPJHP) is in contact with both Polatsek and Slubice officials, and at this time the town has proposed plans to work through the FPJHP. Only funds are lacking; Poloff and the FPJHP have communicated this to Polatsek. (COMMENT: Rabbi Polatsek's interest in forming an international committee for this project strikes us as unnecessary. The FPJHP has managed several successful cemetery renovation projects throughout Poland, and the Embassy has urged Rabbi Polatsek and Slubice to work through it to accomplish his aims. END COMMENT)

HILLAS